

WORLD NEWS



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Lithuania

Lithuanian Communist Leader Urges Party to Cut Kremlin Ties

By David Remnick
Washington Post Foreign Service

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Dec. 19—Lithuania's Communist Party leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, outlined a radical new platform today in which the republic's party organization will break with Moscow and dedicate itself to the eventual creation of an independent Lithuanian state.

The Lithuanian Communist Party is expected during its current congress to defy repeated warnings from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and to endorse Brazauskas's unprecedented series of proposals by an overwhelming majority.

Brazauskas told the congress, in a speech televised throughout Lithuania, that the new independent party structure in the republic would still maintain "fraternal relations" with the central party organization, but would consider itself freed of Kremlin control.

He said that the Lithuanian party considers the future of the Soviet Union to be a "union of sovereign states. The notion of the union is higher than a federation, and only this is acceptable to sovereign states." Such a union, he added, "will strengthen Lithuania's sovereignty and will guarantee its independence. And it will allow us to build a Soviet Union from which we can secede if we wish."

With the rise in the past two years of independent political groups and alternative parties such as the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, the Communists here have struggled to regain a measure of prestige and public support by apologizing for historical

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Soviet Congress Approves Gradual Economic Reform

Six-Year Plan Envisions Transition to Market System

By Michael Dobbs
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Dec. 19—The Soviet parliament approved a controversial economic reform program today, setting the Soviet Union on a slow course toward a market economy while postponing the most painful decisions for at least three years.

The six-year reform program marks the first concerted plan presented by the Kremlin to dismantle the system of central planning under which the Soviet Union has been run for the past six decades. But it has drawn fire both from radicals who argue that the pace of proposed change is too slow and conservatives who insist that it is too fast.

Lithuanian Party Leader Seeks Split From Kremlin

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"mistakes" and disassociating themselves from Kremlin rule. In the past year, more than 10,000 members have quit the Lithuanian Communist Party, and in the legislative elections in March the independence group Sajudis trounced nearly every Communist candidate.

"We announce here publicly that the Communist Party of Lithuania is to blame politically for becoming a constituent part of the Stalinist, totalitarian system and for carrying out its instructions," Brazauskas said.

"We Communists of contemporary Lithuania must create conditions in which that will never happen again."

Brazauskas's endorsement of eventual independence for Lithuania is in sharp conflict with the Kremlin's desire to keep to a policy of gradual transfer of economic and political control to the 15 republics. The yearning for independence, Brazauskas said, is an integral part of "our people's consciousness."

Lithuania was an independent state in the 20 years preceding World War II. A 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact led to the Soviet annexation in 1940 of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Lithuanians, including the Communist Party leadership, consider the pact an illegal document of occupation. A commission report in the Congress of People's Deputies, expected this week, will also denounce the pact, according to several legislators.

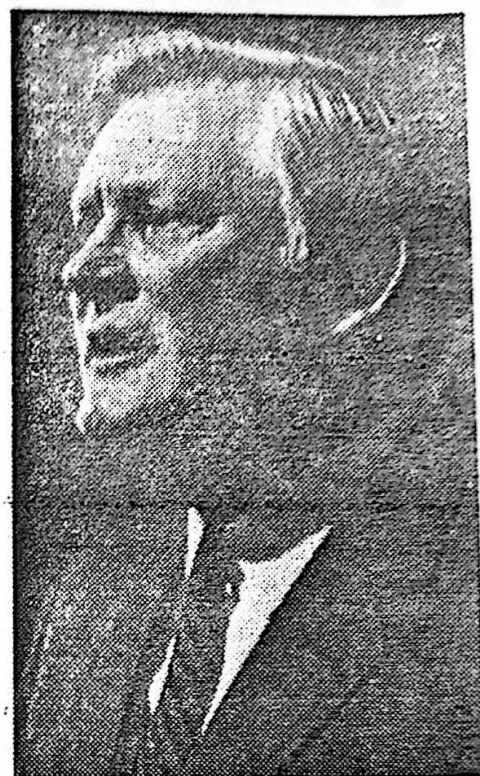
A leader of Sajudis, Arvydas Juozaitis, said that while his group is not interested in joining forces with

the Communists, the Brazauskas speech was "a dress rehearsal. We are getting acquainted with the processes of secession."

Gorbachev's reforms have led to a massive wave of support for secession from the Soviet Union, or at the least far greater sovereignty from Moscow. Brazauskas's outright endorsement of eventual independence from Lithuania may make him more popular in his republic, but it has created problems for him in Moscow. On several occasions, in letters and private meetings, Gorbachev tried to persuade Brazauskas not to make the Lithuanian party independent and to avoid joining the popular movement for independence.

Gorbachev, who is struggling with both conservative resistance and radical opposition within the Communist Party, considers Brazauskas's move counterproductive to the Kremlin's professed drive to reform the party. In a "Letter to the Lithuanian Communists" published earlier this month in Pravda, Gorbachev warned, "unless we remain together, we will go nowhere."

Just a few months ago, Brazauskas approached questions about the independence of both his party and his republic with great delicacy and reluctance. But his radicalization has been swift, the result of local political realities. Although Brazauskas acknowledged that there is a "red line beyond which social instability may occur," he said that the "existing status of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fails to meet the present requirements of Lithuania."



ALGIRDAS BRAZAUSKAS
... for a "union of sovereign states"

Sajudis's Juozaitis said Brazauskas is one of the few remaining Lithuanian Communist officials with any authority or prestige. "He is the only one among them who can save the Communists for the time being," Juozaitis said. "He is their last chance."

Early next year, Lithuania will hold local and republic-wide elections, and Juozaitis said he expects that the Communists would poll about 35 percent and the Social Democrats 10 percent, with Sajudis candidates dominating the election.

While the Lithuanian Communists have proved the most defiant of all the party organizations in Soviet republics, Communist leaders elsewhere are also trying to reshape their party or are abandoning it altogether. Marju Lauristin, a leader of the Popular Front in Estonia and a member of the Communist Party, plans to quit the Communists and join the Estonian Social Democratic Party at its founding congress in the city of Tartu next month.